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ABSTRACT

Noting that the success of the Bay Area Writing Project and the National Writing Project derives largely from their involvement of classroom teachers and from collaboration between university professors and those teachers, this paper discusses recent California legislation that places significant power in the hands of teachers in determining staff development programs. The paper views this phenomenon as part of a nationwide shift of responsibility for teacher education from the colleges and universities to the schools themselves. While noting that this change is laudable in many respects, the paper contends that it effectively cuts off teachers from theoretical and research perspectives and from the philosophical, psychological, and historical insights that college professors can provide. The paper proposes a new model for inservice education based on the ideas of British educator Michael Eraut. It then discusses the model, which identifies the school rather than the school district or the individual teacher as the focal point for educational change and calls for an outside consultant, possibly a college professor, to work in a nondirective way with teachers in identifying needs, setting objectives, delineating resources that can be used for problem solving, determining solutions, implementing them, and evaluating their effectiveness. The paper provides an example in which this model was successfully implemented. (Author/FL)

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RECENT TRENDS IN INSERVICE EDUCATION AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COLLEGE PROFESSOR, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE TEACHING OF WRITING

(Paper delivered at the Conference on English Education, Anaheim, California, March 19, 1981)

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The last time I made a formal presentation at CEE was four years ago. Since that time I have made two important changes in my professional life which sharply affects the way I look at education. First, I changed jobs, moving from a large Midwestern university where I was a specialist in English education to a small private college in California where I work with secondary teacher candidates in many fields--science, mathematics, music, especially P.E., as well as English. Second, in a temporary fit of euphoria, I ran for and was duly elected to a local school board. These two changes have given me a different, broader perspective on teacher education, a perspective which my remarks today will reflect.

Along these lines, my paper will deal with inservice or staff development concerns generally instead of being limited to language arts or to writing projects. If I were pushed to provide a specific title, I would call my remarks, "Random Thoughts about the Present State and Likely Future Direction of Inservice Education in California, with Particular Reference to the Teaching of Writing." That sounds sufficiently esoteric to confuse anybody trying to pin me down.

I would like to base my comments on programs and trends I have observed in California during the 3½ years I have been back here; also, on my interest, over the past six years, in inservice programs that bring together college professors and classroom teachers in ways that benefit both. Too often inservice programs are structured so that they serve the professional needs of just one group--trying to force teachers into the restrictive compartments of university coursework or degree programs, for example, or misusing or even ignoring the expertise of university faculty. I believe that we can foster and implement more fruitful university-school marriages than we have thus far, the progeny of such marriages being, of course, the better education of our children.

Let me at this point make several observations about the Bay Area Writing Project and the writing projects it has spawned throughout this state and country, since these represent an inservice education model that in many ways exemplifies the fruitful marriage I referred to above. For the BAWP model is designed according to principles that seem to make the best use of school and university professionals: it is eclectic in scope, providing a diversity of views on writing and the teaching of writing and how they can be improved; it is built upon and responds to the interests and needs of teachers; in fact, it makes excellent use of their experience and expertise, enabling them to share ideas and practices they have developed and found effective in their own classrooms; it draws also from the latest theories and research findings identified by university professors; it implicitly recognizes, in its membership and its modus operandi, that concern for the improvement of writing is shared by almost all teachers, elementary and secondary, pre-school and college, teachers of social studies and mathematics and art as well as English; and it offers a sustained and sustaining program, one that continues for at least ten weekly sessions and often much longer, which is essential if the effects of the program are to take root in the schools. In many ways, then, the Writing Project has demonstrated an approach to inservice education which might well be emulated in other subject fields and with other school programs. Perhaps that is on the horizon. As some of you may know, Assemblyman Gary Hart of California has recently introduced a bill calling for a mathematics project similar to the Writing Project.

Some of the important features of the Writing Project approach to inservice education may be found in other programs currently in operation in California. I am referring specifically to the staff development section of Assembly Bill 65, the School Improvement Act, and to Assembly Bill 551,

which deals explicitly with staff development. These two bills were also authored by Assemblyman Hart, becoming law in 1977. Schools which obtain funds under provisions of either one of these bills must have a staff development committee in which classroom teachers comprise a majority. This committee, in conjunction with the principal, is charged with planning and implementing a staff development program based on identified needs in the schools. Funds can be used to pay for a variety of inservice activities: for attendance at conferences and workshops; for speakers and consultants; for purchasing certain kinds of materials; for releasing teachers to observe teaching practices and curriculum organization in other schools; even for attendance at summer classes. A provision of the legislation allows--subject to school board approval--the entire faculty to be released for up to eight school days without loss of state funds.

The most significant feature of this legislation, however, is the power that it places in the hands of the classroom teachers. For the first time, in many instances, teachers can not only determine their inservice needs but design and implement their own programs to address these needs. Very few of the AB65 or AB551 programs I have observed involve college or university staff in other than peripheral ways. I would also add, however, that most of these programs are not particularly coherent or consistent, nor do they generally reflect the most current thinking in the field of education. They tend to be disconnected arrays of workshops, consultations, visitations, and planning sessions. Perhaps this sort of thing is inevitable in the early days of a program's operation. Ultimately, however, if inservice education is to have any long-term impact on the curriculum and operation of the schools, more coherent, focused programs must be developed--programs which offer the kind of sustained, deliberate, enlightened support that enables teachers to continue to grow and renew themselves.

AB65 offers relatively generous funding to support a whole gamut of school improvement activities, from parent involvement to curriculum change in addition to staff development. AB551, on the other hand, offers far less money and is limited to a three-year period; but the funds are specifically earmarked for staff development. An important feature of both bills is that they focus on the school as a unit, rather than on the district or on individual teachers. I believe this is a potent concept in inservice education and will return to it a little later.

A second section of AB551 established a series of school resource centers--essentially teacher centers--throughout the state. These resource centers were intended to respond to the inservice needs of schools in their area, particularly to the AB65 and AB551 schools, often playing the role of broker of staff development services. These centers are run by a policy board on which teachers, again, form the majority and on which there is only one position designated for a higher education representative. Clearly, the recent California projects I have been discussing provide only a minor role for college professors.

I see this situation as a piece of a larger picture, in California and nationwide: a shift of power in teacher education from the colleges and universities to school districts and teachers, not only in inservice education but in preservice as well, an encroachment, in other words, in an area that has heretofore been a private reserve of higher education. In many parts of the country, teacher unions and associations are demanding more authority for initial preparation of teachers. In California, the state licensing commission for teachers is considering proposals to require all new teachers, whether they have had four or five years of college preparation, to have additional education after they have begun to teach before they become eligible for full certification. It appears that these

programs of further preparation will be primarily school-based and school controlled, requiring little if any additional college work. If this happens, it will represent another instance of responsibility for teacher education slipping away from the universities.

I view this trend with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I applaud teachers' having a much stronger voice in their own continuing education. If society expects teachers to be professionals, they must be treated as such and not simply as civil servants requiring periodical training mandated by their supervisors. Similarly, it can be reasonably argued that on-site school people--administrators, department chairpersons, curriculum coordinators--have a clearer understanding of the educational needs of beginning teachers than college professors have and should accordingly be the people charged with providing the experiences necessary for full certification. Nevertheless, I feel that teachers and education professors have a great deal to gain through close association with each other and that both will suffer by a reduction of the areas in which they collaborate.

In precisely what ways do the two groups need each other? It seems clear to me that if education professors are to be effective teacher educators, they need continued meaningful contact with the schools for which they are preparing their clients. Only in this way can they understand what is the best preparation for teacher candidates and how to help these candidates effectively link theory and practice. When education professors are expected to do research, it should address school issues and problems. Why else would you have a university-based professional school? Research which is not at least indirectly related to school issues should be conducted in other departments of the university--psychology, sociology, history, philosophy, business. Education professors by the very nature of their work need to be involved with teachers and schools.

At the same time, classroom teachers need the expertise, the insights, the intellectual base that college and university professors can provide. In the give-and-take of everyday school concerns and issues related to their own classrooms, schools and subject fields, it is easy for teachers to lose sight of the larger educational enterprise and of the philosophical, sociological, psychological and historical underpinnings upon which it is based. Professors can help provide this perspective. They can raise philosophical, theoretical, and value-based questions; they can put teachers in contact with current scholarship and research findings and with other professionals wrestling with the same kinds of problems. Most of all, to the extent that ties between professors and teachers are close and continuous rather than distant and sporadic, professors can provide intellectual consistency and coherence to inservice programs--qualities that are vital if the programs are to be effective. As I mentioned earlier, despite the obvious strengths of AB65 and AB551 inservice programs, there is a helter-skelter, erratic quality to their smorgasbord approach. I believe that the involvement of university professors could help to provide direction and coherence to these programs.

I would like now to propose yet another model for inservice education--one which, like the Writing Project approach, can offer the strengths of close school-university ties and at the same time maintain the strong new roles that teachers are now playing in inservice education. My model is basically one developed by Michael Eraut, of the University of Sussex in England (1972).[1] He calls his model a "Consultancy Workshop"; it is based on a problem-solving approach to educational change (pp. 30-31). According to Eraut, the model has five main characteristics (p. 9):

1. The users' (in this case the teachers') needs are paramount.

2. Diagnosis of need must be an integral part of the process.

3. Outside agents should only take nondirective roles, rarely, if ever, violating the integrity of the user by placing themselves in a directive or expert status.

4. Internal resources, i.e., those resources already existing and easily accessible within the client system, should always be fully utilized.

5. Self-initiated and self-applied innovation will have the strongest user commitment and the best chances for long-term survival.

Under this model, as in the AB65 and AB551 legislation, the school rather than the individual teacher or the district becomes the focal point for educational change and for the inservice program to support it. In other words, instead of a hit-and-miss operation involving only a few of the teachers, the entire staff is mobilized. An outside consultant carefully leads the teachers through a series of steps in which they 1) recognize and define needs, 2) diagnose specific problems and set objectives, 3) acquire relevant information (this includes identifying resources that can be committed to solving the problem), and 4) selecting or inventing solutions. Later, the consultant helps the teachers implement solutions and evaluate their effectiveness in terms of earlier-defined needs. At this point the whole cycle can begin again. After the initial steps of the process, it is possible for the consultant to change from a nondirective facilitator to an expert, provided he or she is specifically called upon to do so.

A unique feature of this model involves the identification and cataloguing of available resources. There is a tendency in inservice education to consider as resources only monies which have been specifically earmarked for this purpose. AB65 and AB551 introduced a new dimension by allowing release days to be so considered. Eraut's model calls for consideration

of all resources, especially existing ones since they would presumably remain after the demise of any special funding. In addition to funds and release days, the teachers would consider resources such as time (e.g., How much of their own time are they willing to commit to the project? What adjustments in school and personal schedules could be effected? etc.); expertise within their own staff; physical resources such as facilities and equipment; available community resources (e.g., the existence of self-improvement and group-dynamics courses); and other resources that could be applied to solving the problems which had been identified. The essential feature of this process is that teachers as a group identify the available resources; in this way, the entire faculty can see clearly the resources they have at their disposal to solve their problems.

I believe that the role of outside consultant in Michael Eraut's scheme might well be played by a university professor. The advantage of this is that the professor could tap in an effective way the manifold resources of the university and could help the teachers develop an in-service program that is coherent and consistent with established objectives. Other professors could be drawn into involvement with the schools through the efforts of the consultant/professor. The consultant, of course, would have to be a very special kind of professor since he or she would have to operate in an entirely nondirective fashion with the teachers, at least initially, overcoming the temptation to call on expertise when it hadn't been asked for or to steer teachers to university courses and services when their needs could be more effectively served elsewhere. Similarly, this professor would have to be a person with clout in the university, who could persuade colleagues and administrators to support the inservice projects. The professor would have to be skilled in interpersonal communications and group dynamics and sensitive to the interests and concerns of the teacher/clients, in addition to having the kinds of expertise that would be useful

to the school and respected within the university. Though such a role for professors does not exist in most universities, I believe that it could be an important one, a vehicle through which teachers and professors could collaborate in mutually rewarding ways.

Let me provide you with an example of how this model can work. Several years ago I got involved with an interdisciplinary team made up of individuals from my university and from the local school district. This team operated along the lines of Eraut's model. In one case, I was the outside consultant, not with a whole school but with a high school English department considering substantive changes in organization and curriculum. Working together in released time, with me serving as facilitator, the teachers identified their needs, diagnosed specific problems they wished to work on, and set forth objectives. They also catalogued the other resources they had at their disposal, including meeting times, services of a district curriculum coordinator, and summer vacation time they planned to commit to curriculum planning. They asked me to suggest three ways--from a slight modification of the existing arrangement to a dramatic change--in which the department could reorganize itself to achieve the objectives they had established.

When I returned to present my proposals, I brought along another member of the interdisciplinary team to monitor our decision-making process. She kept us all on target and made sure all members of the department understood every step of the process; and she kept me from slipping into the role of the <u>expert</u>, pushing my own curricular ideas instead of helping the teachers work out theirs. Through this process, the department members were able to make some important decisions and take ownership of these decisions, committing personal as well as institutional resources to a particular course of action. Having made these commitments, they were in a position to decide what kinds of inservice

education they needed. Their program ranged from informal discussions with various consultants to release-time planning sessions to summer curriculum-development workshops taught at the university. Though I was not around to see the new organization and curriculum fully implemented, I understand that the department did proceed according to plan and that the outcome was distinctly successful. The point I want to emphasize is that I was able, as a university professor, to play the nondirective, consultant role outlined by Michael Eraut, and that the inservice program worked because the teachers themselves made the decisions, based on their needs, and committed themselves to carry out the plan. Let me point out one additional advantage to the Eraut model: in these times of economic impoverishment for education, it offers one of the best methods for making efficient use of whatever resources are available.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this presentation, recent changes in my life have affected the way I look at education. The approaches to inservice education I have discussed here--i.e., AB65, AB551, and Eraut's model--focus on the school as the unit of educational change and are concerned with the whole spectrum of organizational and curricular issues, not just with writing or language arts. They reflect my position as a generalist in teacher education and as a school board member concerned with the overall improvement of instruction in the schools. How, then, do these remarks relate to the teaching of English and particularly of writing? In a number of important ways, I believe.

First of all, they suggest that the Writing Project might, with good effect, focus some of their efforts on individual schools, seeking through the nondirective, client-centered approaches I have just discussed to achieve the kind of overall staff commitment and broadly-based change that is likely to endure within a school.

Secondly, by working with teachers of all subjects or, in the case of elementary schools, of various grade levels, Writing Project leaders can implicitly emphasize that writing, as well as the other language arts (reading, talking, listening), permeates the entire academic curriculum. Most English teachers know this, but it is something that many other people, including teachers of other subjects, are not aware of. The involvement of the Writing Project with a school in the holistic manner discussed above reinforces the concept of the comprehensive nature of the language arts.

Finally, and related to the point I have just made, writing provides a focus for an inservice program, a central point or theme about which the disparate parts and thrusts and activities of the total program can meaningfully revolve.

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1. Eraut, Michael In-Service Education for Innovation (Occasional Paper No. 4). London: National Council for Educational Technology. 1972.